Author’s forward 2

Tasawwuf in Essence and in Practice 3
The Question: 3
The Reply: 4
The Object of Tasawwuf 5
Two Methods of Spiritual Purification 8
(1) “ Mujaahada ” 8
(2) “ Taqarrub bin Nawaafil ” 10
The Necessity of Following a “Sheikh” 11
Replies to the Specific Questions 12
Bibliography 16

The chains of tasawwuf and swearing allegiance (bay’ah) 18
The Question: 18
The Reply: 18

Some words of wisdom from Hakeemul Ummah Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanwi (A.R) 22

Author's forward

The booklet in your hands is actually the replies to two questions received at the Daarul Iftaa of Jaamea Daarul Uloom of Karachi. Al'hamdu Lillah, the eminent Sheikhul Islam Hadhrat Maulana Muhammed Taqi Uthmaani (Daamat Barakaatuh) read both these replies and blessed them with his du'aas and signature of approval. By his instruction, the first reply was published in the Al Balaagh magazine and, Al'hamdu Lillah, received a warm response.

Like many other aspects of Deen, Tasawwuf has fallen prey to excesses. The need was therefore felt to publish the replies in the form of a booklet so that people may understand the essence of Tasawwuf and how to derive benefit from the same in the correct manner. This booklet will allow a person to easily understand Tasawwuf in a single sitting.

This booklet also includes some of the priceless sayings of Hakeemul Ummah Hadhrat Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanwi (A.R). May Allaah make this booklet a source of benefit for my lowly self and a means of securing salvation in the Hereafter. Aameen.

(Mufti) Mahmood Ashraf

Tasawwuf in Essence and in Practice

The Question:

As-Salaamu-Alaykum-wa-Rahmatullahi-wa-Barakaatuh

I am presently contemplating joining a chain of Tasawwuf for inner contentment and spiritual purification. However, I hope that you will be able to guide me by clarifying the following:

1. What is the status of the various chains of Tasawwuf according to the Shari'ah?

2. Are the specific forms of Dhikr and the specific methods of reciting them established from the Sunnah or are they Bid'ah practices?

3. What method of spiritual purification do the Qur'aan and Ahadeeth recommend? Is it necessary for the method of spiritual purification to change with the times?

4. A certain chain of Tasawwuf:
   - **(a)** prescribes Dhikr with the breath and
   - **(b)** claim to be able to make people meet Rasulullah ρ and deceased saints.
   - **(c)** What is your opinion about this chain? Should one join them?

5. Some friends are of the opinion that there is no difference between Islamic and non-Islamic chains of mysticism because it merely entails intense meditation, which can be attained in any manner. What is your opinion on this?

I have enclosed a self addressed envelope and trust that you will grace me with a speedy reply. Was Salaam.

The Reply:

Most honoured and respected brother,

We received your letter and have noted the questions pertaining to Tasawwuf and spiritual purification. To understand the replies, it is necessary that you first understand certain fundamental principles. Therefore, an introduction to the essence of Tasawwuf will follow, after which your questions will be individually replied. May Allaah grant us sincerity in explaining and in understanding. Aameen.

At the very outset it should be understood that the purpose of Deen is to attain complete success and nearness to Allaah. This entails entering Jannah without reckoning[1], drawing close to Allaah in this world and seeing Him in the Hereafter[2]. It is therefore necessary for a person to practise the complete Deen and to adopt piety. He should wholeheartedly accept all the injunctions of the Shari'ah and diligently carry them out. It is necessary to carry out every injunction, whether it be relevant to one's external self or one's internal self. Without this, it would be futile to hope for complete success and closeness to Allaah.[3]

The subject of Fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence) discusses all those commands of the Shari'ah that pertain to one's external actions such

---

[1] Allaah says in Surah Aal Imraan, **"Every soul shall taste death and (the fact of the matter is that) you will be given your rewards in full on the Day of Judgement. Whoever is saved from the fire and entered into Jannah shall truly be successful. The life of this world is but an object of deceit."** {Surah 3, verse 185}

[2] Allaah says in Surah Alaq, **"Prostrate (in salaah) and keep drawing closer."** {Surah 96, verse 19}

[3] Rasulullah ρ said, "An intelligent person is one who controls his Nafs (carnal self) and prepares for the life after death. The hapless one is he who panders to the dictates of his Nafs and has hopes in Allaah." {Mishkaat Pg. 451, from Tirmidhi and Ibn Majah}

as salaah, zakaah, Hajj, fasting, Jihaad, etc. It also discusses all the prohibitions of the Shari'ah such as adultery, stealing, consuming intoxicants, etc. These injunctions are derived from the Qur'aan, the Ahadeeth, consensus of the Ulema (Ijmaa) and Qiyaas (analogical deductions made by the jurists).

The subject of Tasawwuf deals with all Allaah's commands and prohibitions that concern one's inner self. Examples of these commands are patience, gratitude, sincerity, Taqwa, etc. Examples of these prohibitions are pride, anger, jealousy, enmity, haughtiness, etc. These injunctions have also been derived from the Qur'aan, Ahadeeth, Ijmaa and Qiyaas. Taswwuf is also referred to as "Sulook" and "Fiqh Baatin".

The Object of Tasawwuf

The actual purpose of Tasawwuf is to develop within the Muslim all traits of good character that Allaah has commanded people to inculcate. Examples of these are patience[4], gratitude[5], Taqwa[6], sincerity[7], etc. Tasawwuf also serves to eradicate evil traits that are inherent within people. Examples of these are pride[8], anger[9], greed[10], jealousy[11], ostentation[12], etc.

---

[4] Allaah says, **"O you who believe! Exercise patience..."** {Surah 3, verse 200}

[5] Allaah commands, **"Be grateful to Me and do not be ungrateful."** {Surah 2, verse 152}

[6] Allaah says, **"O you who believe! Fear Allaah as He ought to be feared."** {Surah 3, verse 102}

[7] Allaah says, **"They were only commanded to worship Allaah, sincerely devoting religion for Him."** {Surah 98, verse 5}

[8] Rasulullah ρ said, "The person who has an iota of pride in his heart shall never enter Jannah." {Mishkaat Pg. 433, from Muslim}

[9] Allaah says, **"Those who spend in ease and adversity, swallow their anger and forgive people. Allaah loves those who do good."** {Surah 3, verse 134}

(Footnote continues on the next page)

To put it simply, it may be said that the objective of Tasawwuf is spiritual purification i.e. to purify one's inner self. With regard to the character traits that receive mention in Tasawwuf, the following two factors must be borne in mind.

Firstly The character traits that form the subject matter of Tasawwuf (be they good or bad) are all inner traits that concern the heart. The focal issues in Tasawwuf are not the outward signs that are often associated with these traits, which the common man can recognise and which can be used to judge a person's inner condition. Although these signs may often be accurate, the common man is prone to make mistakes in judging them. For example, external humility usually indicates inner humility. However, it may occur that a person seems extremely humble externally whereas his heart is filled with pride. On the other hand, a person may appear to be proud while he is actually very humble. By Tasawwuf definitions, the person in the first example is a proud person while the second is a humble person even though people may view the situation differently.

Secondly To achieve perfect piety in terms of Fiqh, it is not sufficient for a person to merely perform one or two salaah or to fast for merely one or two days. To achieve this, it is necessary for a person to carry out all the Faraa'idh and all the Waajibaat together with the

---

[10] Allaah says in Surah TaaHaa, **"Never strain your eyes towards the splendour of the worldly life that We have granted to a party of the disbelievers to enjoy, to test them therewith. The provision of your Rabb is best and more lasting."** {Surah 20, verse 131}

[11] A verse of Surah Falaq reads, **"(I seek refuge) from the evil of the jealous one when he is jealous."** {Surah 113, verse 5}

[12] Rasulullah ρ said, "Even the slightest bit of ostentation amounts to shirk."

NOTE: Only one verse has been quoted above for each example. There are countless other references in the Qur'aan and Ahadeeth.

Sunan Mu'akkadah. Similarly, in Tasawwuf it will also not suffice to merely show gratitude on a few scarce occasions or to exercise patience during one or two adversities. To achieve perfect spiritual purification it is necessary that all the traits of good character take firm root in one's heart. For example, one should always express gratitude to Allaah from within the heart, verbally and physically (by utilising Allaah's bounties for His obedience). Similarly, one should exercise patience upon every occasion that warrants.

In Fiqh it is contrary to true piety for a person to steal occasionally or to earn an unlawful living now and then. Similarly, it is also contrary to spiritual purity for a person to be proud occasionally, to be boastful in carrying out certain actions or to display unwarranted anger on a few occasions. Therefore, it is commonly said that in Tasawwuf a person should reach a level where he possesses the instinctive skill of acquiring good qualities and evil traits become completely extinct within him. Only when a person reaches this stage can it be said that he is spiritually pure and has attained the objective of Tasawwuf. This is that spiritual purity that Allaah has referred to as the key to success.

Allaah says in Surah Shams, **"Undoubtedly, the one who purifies his soul is successful and the one who has smothered his soul with sin is at a loss."** {Surah 91, verse 10}

This is the same spiritual purification that Allaah outlines as one of Rasulullah ρ's primary tasks when He says, **"Allaah has certainly favoured the believers when He sent to them a messenger from among them who recites to them Allaah's verses, purifies them (spiritually) and teaches them the Qur'aan and wisdom. Before this, these people were certainly deviated."** {Surah 3, 164}

This verse (as well as verse 129 of Surah Baqara) make it clear that apart from reciting the Qur'aan to people and teaching them the Qur'aan and **"wisdom"**, Rasulullah ρ was also sent to purify people spiritually. In essence, this very "spiritual purification" is the purpose of Tasawwuf.

It should be noted that despite sending the Qur'aan to mankind, Allaah also sent Rasulullah ρ to guide them and purify their souls. It is learnt from this that only the Qur'aan and knowledge are not

sufficient for spiritual purification, but spiritual purification requires the agency of a "spiritual purifier" (Muzakki). The great wealth of spiritual purification is attained through the guidance and training of this Muzakki. Rasulullah ρ was thus a Muzakki and "Sheikh" to the Sahaaba (R.A) and the Sahaaba (R.A) played the role of Muzakki to those after them (the Taabi'een). In this manner, the chain continued through the generations.

Hakeemul Ummah Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanwi (A.R) mentioned, "Can anyone attain perfection merely through books? No person can become a carpenter without being an apprentice of a carpenter. In fact, he will even be unable to lift an adze as he should if he tries to do so on his own. Without learning from a tailor a person will not even be able to hold a needle as it should be held. Without spending time in the company of a calligrapher and without observing how a pen is held and what strokes are made with the pen, a person cannot become a calligrapher. In short, no craft can be mastered without the company of a master craftsman. (A poet says:)

'O traveller! If you wish to travel this road,
then hold on to the garment of the guide.
Because whoever travels the road of love without a companion,
will pass his life without any awareness of love."[13]

Two Methods of Spiritual Purification

It is established from the Qur'aan and the Ahadeeth the spiritual purification can be acquired in two ways. The first is by "Mujaahada" i.e. exerting oneself in opposing one's passions. The second is termed "Taqarrub bin Nawaafil" i.e. drawing close to Allaah by means of Nawaafil (optional acts of devotion) and other virtuous deeds. The first method (Mujaahada) is the essence of spiritual purification, while the second is an aid to this.

(1) " Mujaahada "

[13] Shari'ah and Tasawwuf, Pg. 106.

Striving to oppose one's passions (Mujaahada) is the objective of the Shari'ah. It is instructed in the Qur'aan and the Ahadeeth, and countless incidents of our pious predecessors feature the same. Note the following verses of the Qur'aan and Hadith:

- Allaah says in Surah Hajj, **"Strive for Allaah with the endeavour that is His right."** {Surah 22, verse 78}
- A verse of Surah Ankaboot reads, **"Whoever strives, only strives for himself. Allaah is Independent of the entire universe."** {Surah 29, verse 6}
- Allaah says also in Surah Ankaboot, **"We shall definitely show Our avenues to those who strive in Our cause. Verily Allaah is certainly with those who do good."** {Surah 22, verse 69}
- Rasulullah ρ said, "The true Mujaahid (one who engages in 'Mujaahadah') is he who strives against his Nafs in obedience to Allaah." {Mishkaat Pg. 15}

People as spoilt as ourselves are startled when we hear about Maujaahadah. However, the truth of the matter is that Mujaahadah is of fundamental importance for the person wishing to tread the path of Tasawwuf. He may practise Mujaahada either after entering into Tasawwuf or before, irrespective of whether he practises it by his own choice or whether Allaah places him into a situation in which he is forced to practise Mujaahadah. In every case, it is necessary for him to practise Mujaahadah.

It is commonly understood that latter day ascetics had adopted practices of Mujaahadah and spiritual exercises ("Riyaadhaat") to attain spiritual purification. This is not true. In fact, practices of Mujaahadah were practised by Rasulullah ρ and the Sahaaba (R.A). Rasulullah ρ endured untold suffering and hardship so that this Deen could flourish and gain a steady foothold. Following in the footsteps of the illustrious Nabi ρ, the Sahaaba (R.A) also endured tremendous agony for the protection of the Deen. These noble souls were extremely conscious about how to attain spiritual purification and always remained prepared for the same. To gauge this, we will mention just a few incidents.

A) Hadhrat Hafsa (R.A) narrates that in her room, Rasulullah ρ slept on a bedding made of coarse cloth which she double folded. In an effort to make it more comfortable for Rasulullah ρ, she once four-folded the cloth. When dawn broke, Rasulullah ρ asked her what bedding she had spread out for him. She replied, "It was the same

bedding which I had four-folded." The Prophet ρ then told her, "Leave it as it was before because it prevented me from the night's salaah." {Shamaa'ilut Tirmidhi}

B) Hadhrat Umar (R.A) once met Hadhrat Abu Bakr (R.A) while the latter was pulling his tongue. Hadhrat Umar (R.A) exclaimed, "O Khalifah of Rasulullah ρ! May Allaah forgive you! What is this?" Hadhrat Abu Bakr (R.A) replied, "This tongue has landed me in many difficulties." {Mishkaat, quoting from Pg. 415 of the Mu'atta of Imaam Maalik. The narration is also reported in Ihyaa'ul Uloom Vol. 3 Pg. 355, quoting from Bayhaqi and Daar Qutni}

C) After salaah, Hadhrat Umar (R.A) once announced that there will be a lecture. When the people gathered, Hadhrat Umar (R.A) began his lecture with the praises of Allaah and salutations upon Rasulullah ρ. Thereafter, he said, "O people! I have seen a time when I used to graze goats for my maternal aunts. In exchange for this, they used to give me a handful of dates and raisins with which I used to spend my day; and what a day it was!"

After the lecture, Hadhrat Abdur Rahmaan bin Auf (R.A) approached Hadhrat Umar (R.A) saying, "O Ameerul Mu'mineen! Today you have only found fault with yourself." Hadhrat Umar (R.A) said, "O Ibn Auf! When I was alone my Nafs told me, 'You are the leader of the Mu'mineen. Which Muslim can be nobler than you?' It was then that I decided to trample upon my Nafs and punish it." {Hayaatus Sahaaba, Vol. 7 Pg. 659}

The above three narrations clearly depict how cautious these pious souls were about their Nafs. They constantly monitored their deeds and the condition of their hearts and were always prepared strive against the dictates of the Nafs.

(2) " Taqarrub bin Nawaafil "

The Shari'ah urges people to draw closer to Allaah by means of optional devotions (called "Taqarrub bin Nawaafil"). Allaah says in Surah Alaq, **"Prostrate (in salaah) and keep drawing closer."** {Surah 96, verse 19}

Rasulullah ρ mentioned that Allaah says, "I declare war on whoever has enmity for a friend of Mine. My servant cannot draw closer to Me with anything more beloved to Myself than those deeds that I have made Fardh (compulsory) on him. My servant constantly draws closer to Me by means of Nawaafil (optional devotions) until I begin to love him. When I begin to love him, I become his ears with which he hears, his eyes with which he sees, his hands with which he holds and his feet with which he walks. If he asks of Me I shall give him and if he seeks My protection, I will protect him." {Jam'ul Fawaa'id Vol. 1 Pg. 208, from Bukhari}

The two methods of attaining spiritual purification ("Mujaahadah" & "Taqarrub bin Nawaafil") are established from the Qur'aan and the Ahadeeth. However, "Mujaahadah" has been termed as the principal factor because if a person has pride, haughtiness, ostentation, etc in his heart and he is bereft of attributes like sincerity, truthfulness, etc, then he will be unable to attain closeness to Allaah by means of Nawaafil. It is therefore necessary for a person to eradicate all evil traits by means of Mujaahadah and inculcate all noble attributes so that even a small amount of Nawaafil may prove to propel a person very close to Allaah.

The Necessity of Following a "Sheikh"

It is necessary for a person to follow a "Sheikh" (Muzakky) in order to attain spiritual purification using the above two methods. It has already been proven from the Qur'aan that a "Muzakky" is certainly required. To understand this from a logical perspective, consider the following:

MUJAAHADAH: The dictates of the Nafs are opposed when a person practises Mujaahadah. However, the carnal passions of every person differ from those of another. In addition to this, these passions also vary within the individual according to a person's specific state of affairs, his age and the incitement of his Nafs and Shaytaan. Added to all of this, every person is plagued by a mixture of emotions; some conforming to the Shari'ah and others contravening the Shari'ah. It is the task of an expert "Sheikh" to teach people how to discern between right and wrong and to prescribe the simplest permissible remedy for each person's spiritual maladies according to the situation one is in. The "Sheikh" is able to do this because he has passed by the same

obstacle and is experienced in prescribing remedies with great insight. The saints refer to Mujaahadah as "Takhliyya".

TAQARRUB BIN NAWAAFIL: Keeping each person's specific situation in mind, the "Sheikh" will also prescribe the easiest method for the person to draw close to Allaah. The Qur'aan and Ahadeeth contain innumerable acts of virtue together with the rewards and benefits of these acts. No person can carry out all of these acts simultaneously. There are many examples of Nawaafil acts like Nafl salaah, Nafl fasts, Sadaqa, Nafl Hajj, Nafl Umrah, recitation of the Qur'aan, teaching Deen, propagating Deen, Jihaad, serving people, meditation, visiting the ill, attending funerals, consoling the bereaved, feeding people, etc, etc. All theses optional acts of devotion take a person closer to Allaah and their virtue has been discussed in the Qur'aan and the Ahadeeth.

Since it is impossible for a person to practise all of these at the same time, it is necessary that a person be selective as to which of these should be given preference. This selection will differ according to the person involved. An experienced Sheikh will be able to accurately prescribe to a person which acts are necessary for the person because a person cannot make a conclusive decision for himself. Even if he does undertake to make a decision by himself, he is prone to err because each person has to contend with his carnal desires and the tendency to either be too lenient or too harsh.

The Sheikh will therefore be best qualified to advise a person to carry out Nafl acts as the occasion warrants in accordance with the person's physical, financial and (most importantly) his spiritual well being. Therefore, according to each person's individual capacity and individual situation, each will draw closer to Allaah as the days progress[14]. According to the terminology of the saints, this "Taqarrub bin Nawaafil" is called "Tahliyya".

Replies to the Specific Questions

---

[14] It is for this reason that saints often say, "The number of ways to reach Allaah are as many as the number of Allaah's creation."

After understanding the above, each individual question posed earlier will be replied to:

1. Although both of the above-mentioned methods of attaining spiritual purification have been proven from the Qur'aan and the Ahadeeth and are both necessary, a person will have to introduce them into his life either one after the other or simultaneously. If a person wishes to introduce them separately into his life, "Takhliyya" will take precedence over "Tahliyya". It the two are introduced simultaneously, one may be overbearing. Which one will this be? One will also need to know which acts of Mujaahadah and Nawaafil acts are most suitable for him. The saints vary in the way they view these aspects. Their views will depend on their perception of the Qur'aan and Ahadeeth, the link they have with other saints, their level and depth of their understanding, their temperament, mastery over the science of Tasawwuf and their experience.

   It is a result of the differences between the various saints that the various chains of Tasawwuf have arisen. For example, the saints of Chistiyyah chain give emphasise Mujaahadah as a priority, which will itself lead one to Taqarrub bin Nawaafil. As a result, a person's entire life will be one of Ibaadah. On the other hand, the Mashaa'ikh (plural of Sheikh) of the Naqshbandiyyah chain place more emphasis on Taqarrub bin Nawaafil because the effect of the various forms of Ibaadah will purify the soul.

   The latter day Mashaa'ikh like Hakeemul Ummah Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanwi (A.R) would prescribe a different form of Tasawwuf for every individual. In this way, he would use the Sunnah to purify their hearts and draw them closer to Allaah in an easy manner even though it appeared to others that no great transformation was taking place.

2. Allaah has commanded people to engage in His remembrance (Dhikr). Allaah clearly commands in the Surah Ahzaab, **"O you who believe! Remember Allaah in abundance and glorify Him morning an evening."** {Surah 33, verse 42}

   Enumerating the attributes of intelligent people in Surah Aal Imraan, Allaah says, **"Those who remember Allaah while standing, sitting, reclining and who ponder over the creation of the heavens and the earth."** {Surah 3, verse 191}

Rasulullah ρ said, "Remember Allaah so excessively that people think you are insane." {Ma'aariful Qur'aan Vol. 7 Pg. 174, quoting from the Musnad of Ahmed Vol. 3 Pg. 68}

Hadhrat Aa'isha (R.A) narrates that Rasulullah ρ would be engrossed in Dhikr at every moment. {Jaami'us Sagheer Pg. 116, quoting from Muslim, Tirmidhi and Abu Dawood}

These verses and Ahadeeth make it clear that one should be engaged in Dhikr at all times, as was the practice of Rasulullah ρ. It is for this reason that Dhikr is permissible in every condition, be it sitting, standing, lying down on the side, lying down on the back, with the head bowed or with the head moving. It is also permissible to make Dhikr audibly or softly, make Dhikr of the first Kalimah, the third Kalimah, Durood, Istighfaar, on an individual basis or on a collective basis. However, a method of Dhikr that is disrespectful or insulting to Dhikr is not permitted. {Tafseer Qurtubi Vol. 4 Pg. 311}

Mashaa'ikh prescribe specific methods of Dhikr during specific times because their experience has taught them that these methods and times are most fruitful. These methods are neither prohibited nor against the Sunnah. Of course, it will be incorrect to term them as Sunnah because it is impossible to conclusively prove that Rasulullah ρ engaged in that particular method of Dhikr at that particular time. It is also not possible to forbid these methods of Dhikr because no clear Qur'aanic verse or hadith forbids them.

In short, it should be borne in mind that Dhikrullah (remembrance of Allaah) earns great reward for a person. All the methods of Dhikrullah prescribed by the Mashaa'ikh are permissible in themselves. They cannot be termed as Sunnah nor can all be termed as Bid'ah (innovations). If a person regards his particular form of Dhikr as Sunnah, he will be guilty of perpetrating a Bid'ah e.g. when a form of Dhikr is attributed to Rasulullah ρ or extra rewards are anticipated for it.

3. As discussed earlier, two methods of attaining spiritual purification have been ascertained from the Qur'aan and the Ahadeeth. Although these are two, their constituents are innumerable. The Mashaa'ikh of every period in time keep changing some of these and give preference to some over others in accordance with the conditions and people. A Sheikh is only permitted to do this when he is particular

about the Sunnah, avoids acts of Bid'ah and has been approved by a reliable Sheikh to continue his practices. This is necessary to prevent Bid'ah and curb people from diverting from the straight path. Because the thorns of Bid'ah and excesses are strewn on either side of the path of Tasawwuf, it is not easy for one to safeguard himself and his followers from these.

4. **(a)** This form of Dhikr is termed as "Paas Anfaas". If this practice is not regarded as Sunnah and as a form of greater reward, no grudge will be borne against any person who does not carry out the practice. It is however tragic that the behaviour of many people is excessive in this regard. When their Sheikh prescribes a particular method of Dhikr for them and they derive benefit from it, they regard this particular method of Dhikr as an objective in itself. They then promote this method to everyone else and look down on the person who practises another method of Dhikr. This approach is wrong.

   It often occurs that people even go a step further by declaring this particular form of Dhikr to be Sunnah and condemn those who do not practise the same. In this manner, they transgress the limits of the Shari'ah and perpetrate Bid'ah. With this in mind, the reliable Mashaa'ikh do not promote such practices and may only permit it in specific individual cases when necessary.

   (b) Although it is possible to meet people in dreams and when Allaah allows a person to experience "Kashf", this is not part of Mujaahadah and is not the objective of Tasawwuf.

   (c) This depends on whether a person has affinity for this chain or not, and depends on what his objective is.

5. Whatever has been said so far concerned Tasawwuf, which the Shari'ah encourages because it is a means of spiritual purification. The two methods of attaining this are (1) Mujaahadah and (2) Taqarrub bin Nawaafil. The objective of this exercise is to attain nearness to Allaah in this world and in the Hereafter, which is the goal of every Mu'mineen and true success. May Allaah guide us to this. Aameen.

   Some people confuse Tasawwuf with the practices of monks, Hindu Jogis and Buddhists, thinking that these people also engage in Mujaahadah and that they also achieve spiritual purity. It should be

understood that man is made up of two entities – (1) the body and (2) the soul. The soul is the leader and the body has to follow. If the body is developed, it will become strong, powerful and imposing irrespective of whether a person is a Muslim or a kaafir. On the other hand if the soul is developed, the soul will become strong, powerful and imposing, irrespective of whether a person is a Muslim or a kaafir.

When the Hindu Jogis, Christians monks and Buddhists practise a form of Mujaahadah according to their respective religions, their souls become powerful and dynamic. However, their hearts are never purified and there is no question of them drawing close to Allaah. On the other hand, when a Mu'min practises Mujaahadah according to the pure Shari'ah of Islam, then his soul also becomes powerful and dynamic. However, his heart is also purified and he draws close to Allaah.

A simple example of this is that of a dirty mirror. If it is washed with clean water, it will begin to shine and will be pure. However, if it is washed with urine, it will also shine, but it will obviously never be pure. It will remain impure and continue to stink. It is necessary that only pure water be used for this purpose.

The above passage was written in response to a written query. In reality, Tasawwuf is not related to books, but to practice. It is not related to external deeds but to internal conditions. It cannot be achieved from books but from the personal guidance of a Sheikh who is a friend of Allaah. May Allaah make our external and internal conditions conform to the Qur'aan and the Sunnah. May He bless us with the great wealth of spiritual purity and closeness to Him in both worlds. Aameen.

Bibliography

Besides, the famous books of Qur'aan and Ahadeeth that have been quoted as references, reference has also been made to the following works which have not been specifically mentioned. These are:

1. Tafseer Ma'aariful Qur'aan by Maulana Mufti Shafee (A.R).
2. Ihyaa'u Uloomud Deen by Hadhrat Imaam Ghazaali (A.R).

3. At Takasshuf am Muhimmatit Tasawwuf by Hakeemul Ummah Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanwi (A.R).
4. Haqeeqate Tasawwuf wa Taqwa by Hakeemul Ummah Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanwi (A.R).
5. Shari'at wa Tareeqat by Hakeemul Ummah Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanwi (A.R).
6. Tarbiyatus Saalik by Hakeemul Ummah Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanwi (A.R).
7. Basaa'iru Hakeemul Ummah by Hadhrat Dr. Abdul Hayy Aarifi (A.R).
8. Tajdeed Tasawwuf wa Sulook by Hadhrat Maulana Abdul Baari Nadwi (A.R).
9. Shari'at wa Tasawwuf by Hadhrat Maulana Maseehullah Sherwani (A.R).
10. Naji Makaatib by Hadhrat Haaji Muhammed Shareef Saheb (A.R) and Hadhrat Maulana Maseehullah (A.R).

(This Fatwa was compiled by Hadhrat Mufti)

Mahmood Ashraf
Daarul Iftaa
Jaamea Daarul Uloom Karachi
26 Muharram 1414 A.H.

(This Fatwa was endorsed by Hadhrat Mufti)

Muhammed Taqi Uthmaani (Daamat Barakaatuh) on the 30 Muharram 1414 A.H.

The chains of tasawwuf and swearing allegiance (bay'ah)

The Question:

To the most honoured Hadhrat Maulana Mufti Mahmood Ashraf (Daamat Barakaatuh),

As-Salaamu-Alaykum-wa-Rahmatullahi-wa-Barakaatuh.

I thoroughly enjoyed your article on Tasawwuf that appeared in the monthly Al Balaagh magazine. I read the article thrice and found it to be most comprehensive and well substantiated. While reading the article, the following few questions occurred to my mind, which I have submitted to you.

1. How many chains (schools) are there in Tasawwuf? You have only mentioned the Chistiyyah and Naqshbandiyyah.
2. Who initiated these chains and when did this occur?
3. What is the method of pledging allegiance (taking Bay'ah) according to the Shari'ah?

Thanking you in anticipation.

The Reply:

Respected Brother,
As-Salaamu-Alaykum-wa-Rahmatullahi-wa-Barakaatuh

I have received your valued letter and have acknowledged the contents. May Allaah make this treatise a source of benefit to the writer and all the readers. Aameen. Hereunder follows the replies to your queries:

Replies to questions 1 & 2:

There are four chains of Tasawwuf that are most popular. These are:

A) **The Qaadiriyyah Chain**: This is linked to Hadhrat Sheikh Abdul Qaadir Jaylaani (A.R) [470 A.H. to 561 A.H.].
B) **<u>The Chistiyyah Chain</u>**: This chain is linked to Hadhrat Khwaja Mu'eenud Deen Chisti (A.R) [527 A.H. to 633 A.H.].
C) **<u>The Suharwardiyyah Chain</u>**: This chain is linked to Sheikh Shihaabud Deen Suharwardi (A.R) [539 A.H. to 632 A.H.].
D) **<u>The Naqshbandiyyah Chain</u>**: This chain is linked to Hadhrat Khwaja Bahaa'ud Deen Nakhshband (A.R) [718 A.H. to 791 A.H.].

The chains of these four Mashaa'ikh became especially popular because Allaah had utilised these four Mashaa'ikh to purify the souls of a large number of people. The positive effect that had on people was widespread and very complete. These four Mashaa'ikh possessed deep knowledge of Tasawwuf, practised it thoroughly and rendered great services due to which the Mashaa'ikh after them acknowledged their greatness and piety. Consequently, these latter-day Mashaa'ikh regarded it as an honour to be associated with the four Mashaa'ikh and realised that this association would safeguard their religious welfare. Of course, there were other Mashaa'ikh besides these four who also rendered great services to the Ummah.

The four chains of Tasawwuf lead to the four Mashaa'ikh mentioned above respectively and thereafter lead to the Taabi'een and Sahaaba (R.A). The method of pledging allegiance in all four chains is linked to the Khulafa Raashideen, all of whom pledged allegiance at the hands of Rasulullah ρ. They all pledged to adhere to Imaan, fight in Jihaad and forsake sin. The act of Bay'ah therefore needs no proof.

All of these four chains split into many more divisions at the bottom just like how family trees split into many family branches. It is usually believed that there are fourteen famous branches in Tasawwuf lineage. Hadhrat Gangohi (A.R) writes that there are many branches that sprout from the four main chains of Tasawwuf. Whoever recorded fourteen branches had written it during his time when there were fourteen. There have been many more after these. It will therefore not be accurate to restrict the number to fourteen. {Makaatibe Rasheediyyah Pg. 79}

In recent times, allegiance is pledged in all four chains so that respect is shown to all the Mashaa'ikh and so that discord does not set in. This

has been encouraged by great personalities like Haaji Imdaadullah Makki (A.R), Hadhrat Maulana Rasheed Ahmed Gangohi (A.R) and Hakeemul Ummah Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanwi (A.R).

The Reply to Question 3 :

The Mashaa'ikh (A.R) are united on the fact that sincere Taubah and spiritual purification are necessary to attain salvation. It is therefore not compulsory to take Bay'ah if this is achieved. However, the practice of taking Bay'ah is common in all chains of Tasawwuf because a person makes Taubah in the presence of his Sheikh, solemnly undertakes to forsake all sins and to purify his soul. As a result of this, Taubah and spiritual purification become easy and the Sheikh is able to assist.

Explaining the method of taking Bay'ah, Hadhrat Maulana Maseehullah Sherwani (A.R) writes, "The Bay'ah is actually a pledge. The Bay'ah of Tareeqah refers to an undertaking to give due regard to all external and inner deeds and to be particular about all the injunctions of Shari'ah. All the saints of past and present have practised this. Besides the pledge to fight in Jihaad and to accept Islam, the Sahaaba (R.A) also pledged to Rasulullah ρ that they will be particular about the injunctions of the Shari'ah. This is proven by numerous Ahadeeth … A Sheikh usually takes the right hand of a follower in his right hand when accepting the Bay'ah, while a large group will pledge allegiance using a handkerchief, etc. Also using a handkerchief (scarf, shawl, etc), women take the Bay'ah from behind a screen with a Mahram being present with her, as has been reported in the Ahadeeth."

"This is with regard to the person who is in the presence of the Sheikh. As for those who cannot present themselves, they may do so by correspondence or through the agency of a reliable person. This is referred to as the Uthmaani Bay'ah because Rasulullah ρ took the Bay'ah of Hadhrat Uthmaan (R.A) in his absence on the occasion of the Bay'ah of Ridhwaan. Rasulullah ρ placed his right hand upon his left saying that he had taken a pledge from Hadhrat Uthmaan (R.A)." {Shari'at wa Tasawwuf Pgs. 100 to 200}

And Allaah knows best.
Mahmood Ashraf Uthmaani
Daarul Iftaa
Jaamea Daarul Uloom Karachi
7 Rabee'ul Aakhir 1414 A.H.

This Fatwaa was endorsed by Hadhrat Mufti Taqi Uthmaani (Daamat Barakaatuh) on the 7th of Rabee'ul Aakhir 1414 A.H.

Some words of wisdom from Hakeemul Ummah Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanwi (A.R)

The following quotations have been extracted from the book Ma'aathir Hakeemul Ummah (A.R).

1. Someone once wrote to Hakeemul Ummah Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanwi (A.R) asking him what it was that people derive from the saints and what was the method of deriving this?

   Hakeemul Ummah Thanwi (A.R) replied, "There are certain actions that we have been commanded to carry out. These actions may be related to the external or internal self. In both these categories of actions, errors may occur in theory or in practice. After hearing about the condition of a person, the Mashaa'ikh are able to diagnose the person's problems and prescribe a cure. It is up to the individual to practise on the prescription. Certain forms of Dhikr are also prescribed to help a person along his path." {Pg. 155}

2. Hakeemul Ummah Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanwi (A.R) once wrote to someone saying, "Al'hamdu Lillah, the objective of this path (of Tasawwuf) has been clearly defined as attaining Allaah's pleasure. Two things now need clarification, viz. the knowledge of "Tareeq" and how to practise on it. Understand that Tareeq is only one; i.e. being particular about all injunctions that apply to one's external self and one's inner self."

   "There are two auxiliaries to this Tareeq. The first is to engage in Dhikr as much as one can and the second is to remain in the company of saints as often as one can. If one is unable to spend much time in the company of saints, one should study their lives and statements. There are two factors that present an obstacle to reaching one's goal. These are (1) sins and (2) futile pursuits." {Pg. 156}

3. "For those who have entered the chain because of myself, I do not emphasise Dhikr, Wazaa'if and other actions as much as I

emphasise the importance of correcting character. Much emphasis is laid on this because it is of utmost importance to beautify one's character. In today's times, most people are very particular about their Wazaa'if but fail to correct their character." {Pg 149}

4. Hakeemul Ummah Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanwi (A.R) was once discussing the stages of internal purification together with mentioning one's relationship with Allaah and the practices of those who followed the mystics. Thereafter, he said, "The essence of all of this is that the Faraa'idh and Waajibaat are fulfilled, Allaah's commands are carried out and that the rights of people come to light. Therefore, if this is achieved by mysticism then everything is achieved. Otherwise, nothing is achieved." {Pg. 129}

5. Someone once wrote to ask for a Wazifah to follow so that good deeds may be increased and sins may be forsaken. The reply was, "Obedience and sin are both voluntary actions and a Wazifah will have no bearing on them. As far as Tareeqa is concerned, it merely facilitates the use of one's choice in voluntary matters. Of course, Mujaahadah is necessary to make this easy. The essence of Mujaahadah is to oppose the Nafs. Matters will gradually become easy when one adopts Mujaahadah on a continuous basis. I have discussed the entire matter. Now the Sheikh is left with two duties. One is to diagnose the spiritual disease and the second is to prescribe a form of Mujaahadah that will cure the disease." {Pg. 179}

6. "The essence of this path (of Tasawwuf) is spiritual purification. There are two factors from which one needs purification; (1) carnal passions and (2) pride. The cure for these is to remain in the company of a Sheikh because he has already travelled the road." {Pg. 287}

7. "The person who treads the path of Tasawwuf should keep the external and internal etiquette in mind. External etiquette entails associating with people with good manners, perfect humility and with good character. Internal etiquette refers to being conscious of Allaah in all conditions and at all times." {Pg. 289}

8. "A brief cure for evil character traits is that one should only carry out an action after contemplating whether the Shari'ah allows such an action. Thereafter, one should not be hasty, but should carry out

the action calmly. One should also keep one's Sheikh informed about one's condition and strictly adhere to what he prescribes. In addition to following the instructions of the Sheikh, one should also trust in what he advises." {Pg. 291}

9. "An easy way of creating love for Allaah is to sit in the company of those who love Him." {Pg. 297}

10. "Naqshbandiyyah, Chistiyyah and others are merely names. The essence of all are the same. **"They are all the party of Allaah. Behold! The party of Allaah is certainly successful."[15]** In addition, some adherents to the Naqshbandiyyah think like the adherents to the Chistiyyah and vice versa. This is just like **"Allaah has divided you into tribes and families so that you may recognise each other."[16]**

    In a like manner, this applies to adherents of all the chains. However, people have begun to regard the restrictions as objectives. The Chisti Sheikh should not reform all his followers in the manner adopted by the Chistiyyah. Similarly, the Naqshbandi Sheikh should not reform all his followers according to the practices of the Naqshbandiyyah chain. It is necessary for every Sheikh to ascertain the capabilities of every follower and prescribe a course of action most suitable for the follower." {Pg. 139}

❑❑
❑❑

A H Elias (Mufti)
1424 / 2004

[15] Surah 58, verse 22.
[16] Surah 49, verse 13.